

3 The passage below describes two English writers' experience of renting a room in Spain from a French woman they meet on a bus.

(a) Comment on the style and language of the passage. [15]

(b) The French woman decides to advertise her property in a tourist brochure. She wishes to describe its surroundings and facilities in the best possible light. She asks you to write the advertisement. Basing your answer closely on the material of the extract, write the opening section (between 120-150 words) of the advertisement. [10]

Her house, facing the cool blue blaze of the bay, was more than we had dreamed; we fell in love immediately with the smallest room, its french window-doors opening onto a balcony-terrace, perfect for writing: vines wove green leaves in the railing; a palm and a pine tree grew alongside shading one side, and a slatted bamboo awning could be drawn out to form a little roof as shelter from the direct noon sun. We knocked her down from the first price to 100 pesetas a night, figuring we could save immensely by doing our own marketing and cooking. From her rapid babble of French, mangled by a strong Spanish accent, we gathered that she would trade Spanish lessons for English lessons, that she had been a teacher, and lived in France for three years. 5 10

As soon as we moved in, it became clear that Madame was not used to running a *maison*¹ for boarders. There were three other empty rooms on the second floor which she evidently hoped to let out, for she spoke continually of how we must manage for 'les autres', when they arrived. She had amassed a great quantity of white china plates, cups and saucers in the formal dining room, and an equally large amount of aluminium pots and pans hung on hooks lining the kitchen walls, but there was absolutely no silver tableware. Senora seemed shocked that we did not carry knives, forks and spoons about with us, but brought out, finally, three elaborate place-settings of her best silver which she laid out, saying that this was only for the three of us, and she would soon go to Alicante to buy some simple kitchen silver for us and put her best silver away. Also, the problem of a small bathroom, fine for the two of us, but hardly fitted for eight, and the trouble of arranging cooking and dinner schedules on one petrol burner, seemed not to have occurred to her either. 15 20

We held our breath and wished fervently that she would have no customers when she put up the sign: Apartments for rent, on our balcony-terrace. We had, at least, made sure that she would not use our balcony, which adjoined another larger room, as a selling point, by explaining that it was the only place we could write in peace, since our room was too small for a table, and the beach and garden were fine for vacationers, but not for writers' workrooms. Occasionally, from our balcony (where we soon took to eating meals: steaming mugs of *café con leche* in the morning, a cold picnic of bread, cheese, tomatoes and onions, fruit and milk at noon, and a cooked dinner of meat or fish with vegetables, and wine, at twilight under the moon and stars –) we could hear Senora conducting people around the house, speaking in her rapid staccato French. But during the first week, although she had conducted several potential roomers about, no one had come. We had fun hazarding on the objections they might make: no hot water, one small bathroom, only an antique petrol burner – with such modern hotels in town, probably her price was too high: what wealthy people would be willing to market and cook? who but poor students & writers like us? Perhaps the roomers might decide to eat out in the expensive restaurants; that was a possibility. We had found out, too, that although she had made wild, extravagant gestures when showing us about the house – pointing to an empty ice-less icebox, motioning out an imaginary electrical machine for making the freezing shower-water warm – that none of these comforts were forthcoming. We found the water from the taps was unpalatable and strange to taste; when the Senora miraculously produced a glass pitcher full of delicious 25 30 35 40 45

sparkling water for our first dinner, we asked incredulous if it came from the taps. She burred on evasively about the health-giving qualities of the water, and it was a full day before I caught her drawing up a pail of it from a cistern sunk deep in the kitchen, covered by a blue board.

¹maison – guest house